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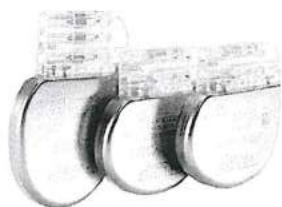
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The CES Decompress



Charlie Fink Contributor

I'm a former tech executive covering VR, AR and new media for Forbes.

Come home. Sleep. Sort through 100 business cards. Try to recall what just happened.



Even NASA was there. CHARLIE FINK

The Consumer Electronics Show (CES) the largest trade show in the world, closed the books on 2018 on Friday, January 12th. 170,000 attendees swarmed Vegas for four days of floor showcases, panels, parties, and traffic gridlock. CES is spread all over the city. Each venue is a mile or two from the main show floors, which during CES means a forty minute cab ride. Even when you get to the hotel or the convention center, you can still walk another twenty or thirty minutes to reach your destination. Usually, the madness of the crowds reaches its peak on the third day. This year it seemed like the crush started when the doors opened on Tuesday, January 9th.

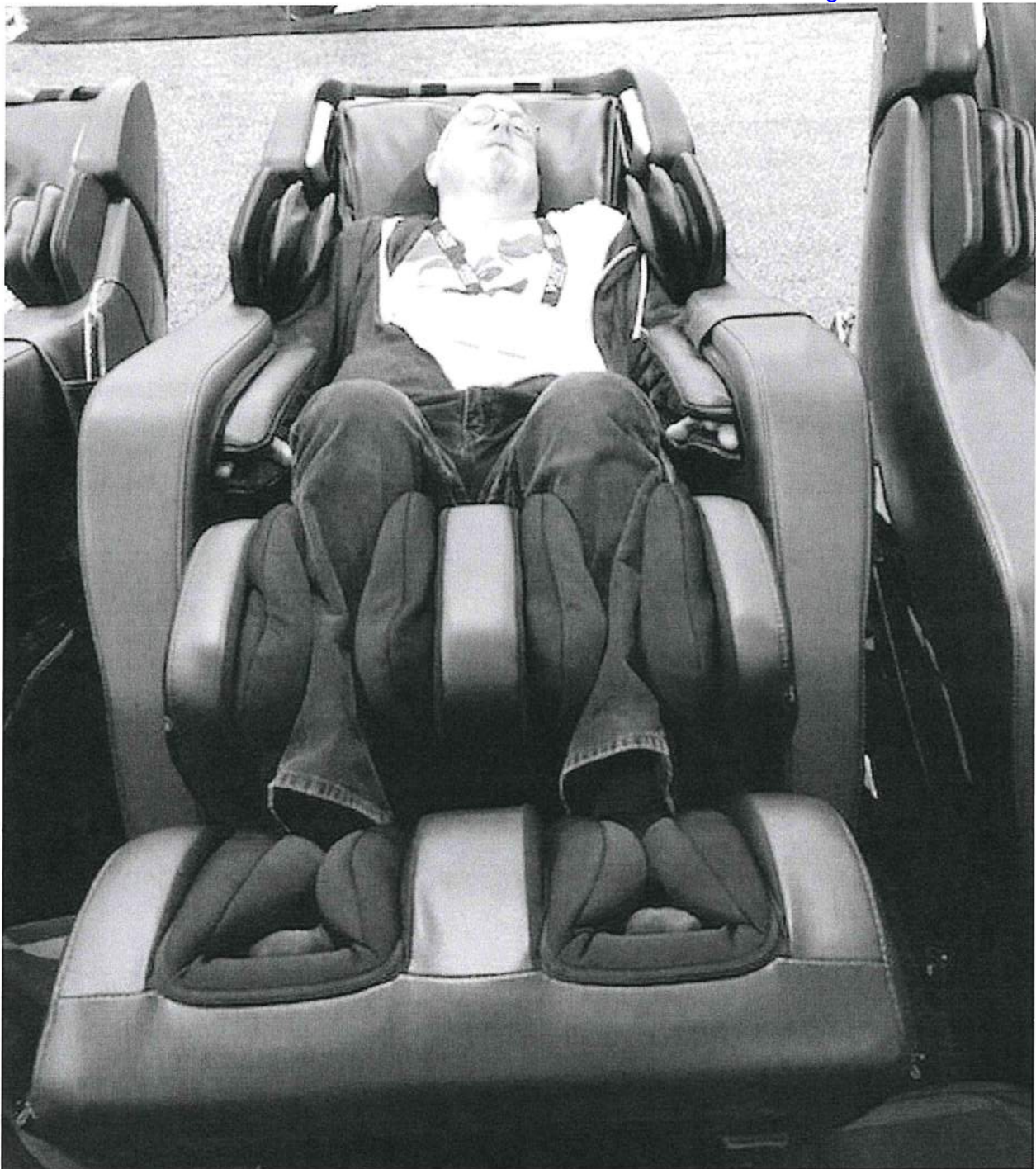


This was the crush on day one, hour one of CES. CHARLIE FINK

I was instantly reminded of my CES peeves: people who stop in pedestrian traffic lanes to check their cell phone; booth attendants with bad breath (they have to get close because of the relentless din); people with black or glossy cards you can't write on; and, finally, at the risk of sounding like a deservedly unpopular American politician, booth attendants who don't speak English, including those

in the booth of a large Chinese company with an impressive AI driven handheld translator.

It would be impossible to cover 2.75 million net square feet of exhibit space spread across Las Vegas – the largest show floor in CES' 51-year history. The show's official venues spread from Las Vegas Convention Center (LVCC) to the Westgate next door, the Renaissance across the street, the Sands Expo Center, The Venetian, The Palazzo, Wynn, Encore, ARIA, Cosmopolitan, and Vdara. "Large and small companies from around the globe came to Las Vegas this week to use CES 2018 to launch technologies that will change our world," said Gary Shapiro, president and CEO, Consumer Technology Association (CTA).



Your erstwhile reporter on the last day in the world's sweetest massage chair. They finally chased me out by trying to sell it to me for \$4,999. Show special. CHARLIE FINK

I couldn't come close to spending time with all the VR and AR products, ideas and people that were at CES, let alone the vast array of objects, machines and devices which are now legitimate Consumer Electronics. One thing I'm not going to talk about: the things my 7,000 (not a typo) colleagues in the media have already written about such as the Intel keynote, the 100 drones light show, a brief power outage in the central hall, drift racing BMWs, or the Samsung VR auditoriums.

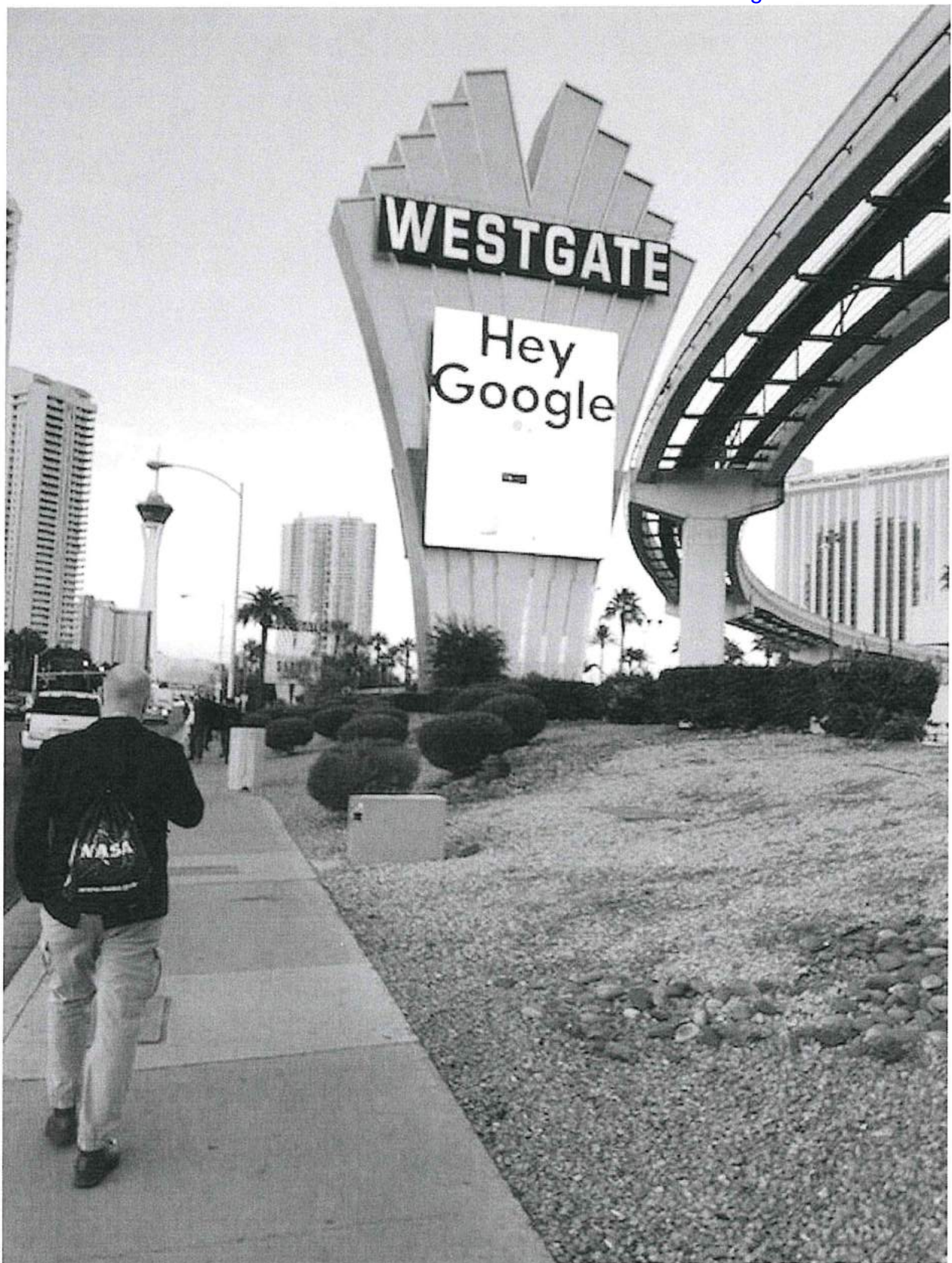
I'll get my AR/VR highlights, but first I want to talk about the general vibe of the show. For me, 2018 will be remembered as the Google year. They were everywhere. And everyone in every hall was talking about digital assistants, AI, Computer Vision, Machine Learning and how everyone's everything integrates with Home or Alexa.



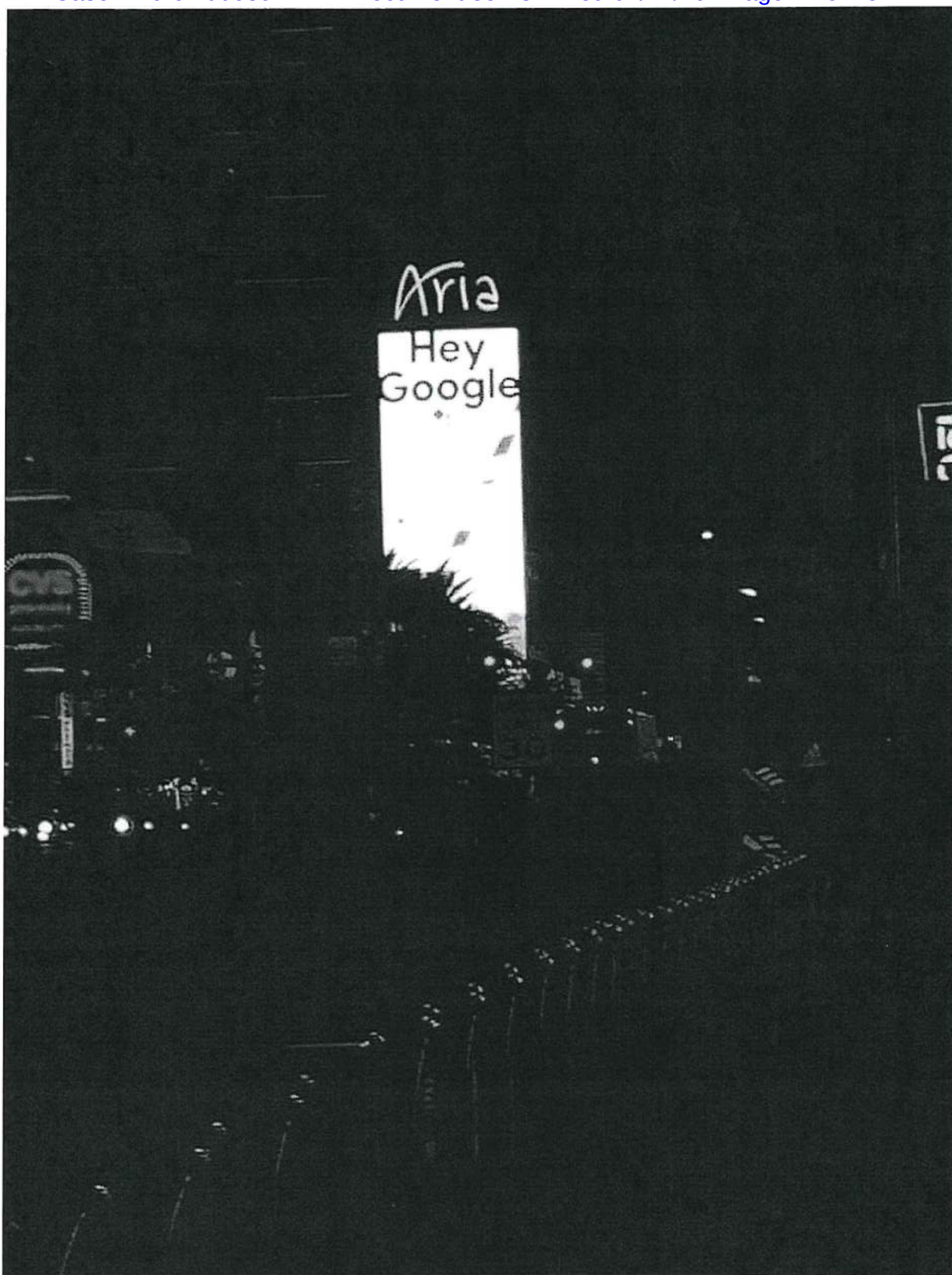
LAS VEGAS, NV - JANUARY 07: A Las Vegas Monorail car with a Google ad is seen running prior to the CES 2018 on January 7, 2018 in Las Vegas, Nevada. CES, the world's largest annual consumer technology trade show, runs from January 9-12 and features about 3,900 exhibitors showing off their latest products and services to more than 170,000 attendees. (Photo by Alex Wong/Getty Images)



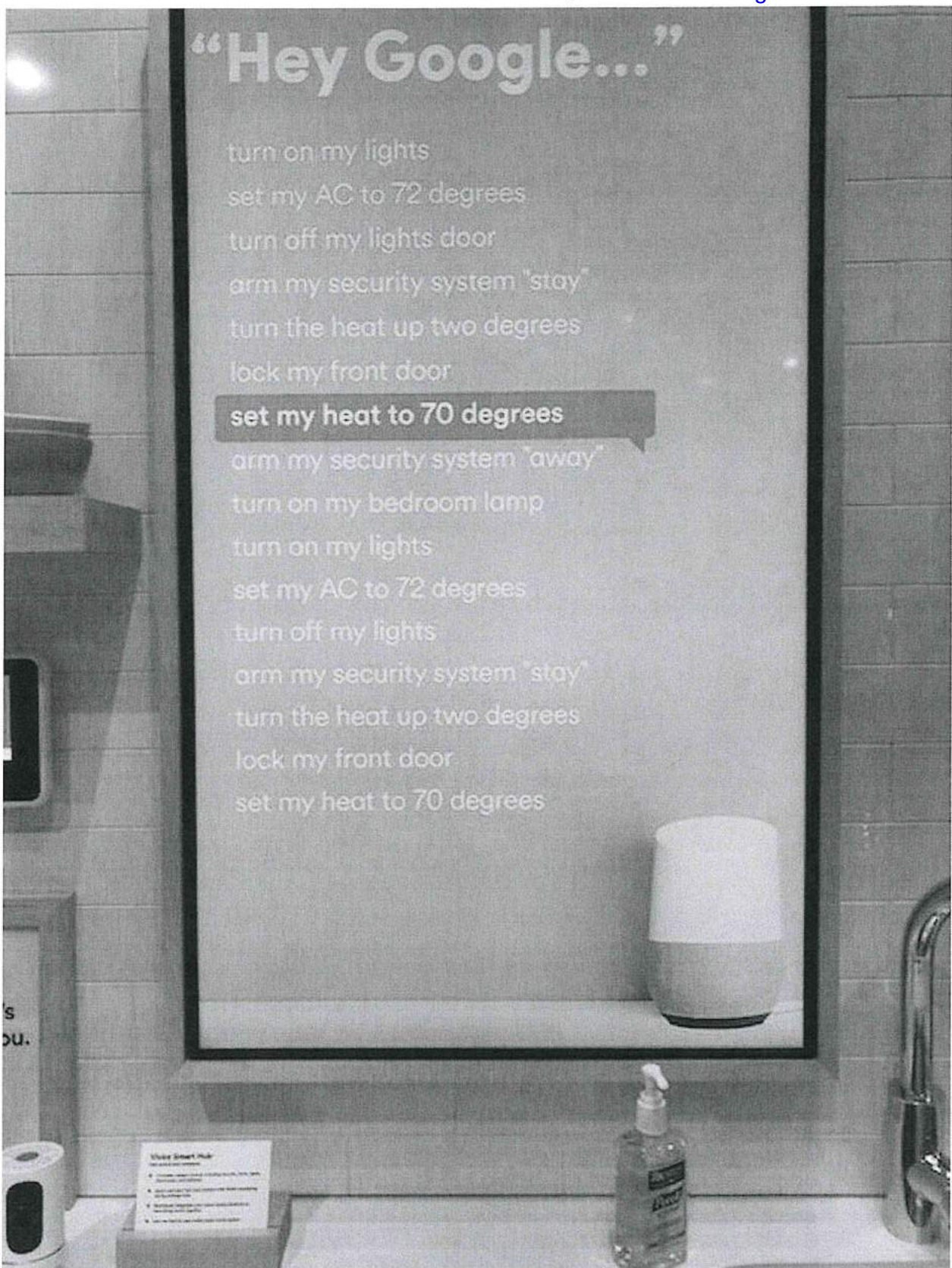
Google in lights at CES. CHARLIE FINK



Next to LVCC. At CES 2018, Google was omnipresent. CHARLIE FINK



Google was everywhere at CES2018. Hey Google. Stop. CHARLIE FINK



Google thinks people want to do this. CHARLIE FINK

Other big themes:

Cars are consumer electronics, too, and consumer electronics for cars are using the most advanced AR available right now. No headset required.

IoT, Wearables & Neurables. Something is happening with performance sports monitoring, wearables and brainwave sensors. I made up the word Nuerable. It's a wearable for your brain.



LAS VEGAS, NV - JANUARY 11: The Yamaha Fazer R combustible engine, industrial-use unmanned helicopter is displayed at the Yamaha booth during CES 2018 at the Las Vegas Convention Center on January 11, 2018 in Las Vegas, Nevada. The USD 100,000 autonomous drone is primarily used for high-end agricultural purposes. It features a 32-liter capacity tank that allows it to spray about four hectares without reloading chemicals or refueling. CES, the world's largest annual consumer technology trade show, runs through January 12 and features about 3,900 exhibitors showing off their latest products and services to more than 170,000 attendees. (Photo by Ethan Miller/Getty Images)

Drones, not AR and VR, dominated the vast South Halls 1 & 2 of the LVCC. I looked it up and found out why: 2.4 M personal drones were sold in 2016, generating \$4.5 billion, according to research firm Gartner. Industrial and Military sales account for another \$4 B.

What's the deal with products to help you sleep? There must be a lot of people who need help with this, because there are a lot of companies, like Phillips, making things to help us sleep.



Everywhere you go at CES, someone going to make you sleep better. This solution, which I was told was "relaxing" actually plays a spa-like audio sales pitch. CHARLIE FINK

A lot of the action was actually not at CES but in hotel suites and private conference rooms at both the show and other hotels around town, like Caesar's and The Hard Rock. The epic difficulty getting around the city during the show made it hard to see everyone and everything I wanted. However, I was fortunate that VR Voice asked me to lead their broadcast from the floor of the show for four hours a day from the Vuze Camera booth in the VR/AR area of the South Hall. The world came to us. Vuze makes an \$800 3D 360 4K (ultra high definition) camera which is necessary to create 3D environments for VR. We hosted twenty-seven leaders in the category, including Viveport President Rikard Steiber, Tony Parisi, Global Head of VR/AR for Unity, and Ted Schilowitz, Futurist, Paramount Pictures. All the interviews are archived on Crowdcast.io.



Tony Parisi, Global Head of VR/AR for Unity, being interviewed by author Charlie Fink in the VR Voice/Vuze Camera broadcast booth on the CES Las Vegas show floor. MICHAEL

EICHENSEER



CES 2018 Women of VR panel, VR Voice Broadcast from the Vuze Camera Booth on the floor of LVCC. Pictured from left, Sarah Hill, CEO Chief Storyteller at Story-up, Suzanne Lagerweij, CEO of Field of Views, Joanna Popper, EVP of Media and Marketing at Singularity University, Alina Mikhaleva, Co-founder at SPHERICA VR studio, Laura Mingail, Director, Marketing & Business Development at Entertainment One, and Rutha Aronson, VP Product and Marketing at Humaneyes Technologies BOB FINE

"There was a significant lack of women speakers at CES, even when top female leaders in VR and technology, in general, were in attendance at the event", said Laura Mingail, from Entertainment One in Toronto. "Suzanne Lagerweij (of Vuze Camera) thought we should be heard, so we quickly gathered colleagues considered the leading women in VR to share insights on the VR Voice Crowdcast." Panelists shared insights into topics ranging from content, storytelling and monetization.



Interviewing Justin Barad of Osso VR, which creates realistic simulations for orthopaedists. MICHAEL EICHENSEER



With Jeremy Kenisky of Merge VR and their new "Blaster". MICHAEL EICHENSEER



HTC Vive made the most noise in VR by introducing the Vive Pro, which addresses the most asked for improvements in high-end home VR: *better optics* (no screen door!), and *wireless*. The upgraded headset also features dual noise-canceling mics, better 3D audio. The 2880 x 1660 resolution optical view is 78% better than today's Vive. While the new Vive Pro is backward compatible with their lighthouses and controllers, it also supports 10 x 10 room tracking (presently users are limited to 6 x 6 feet of free roam. The Pro will be released this summer, but as yet no price has been announced. It won't be cheap. A company executive told me the prosumers and enterprise users this product targets aren't price sensitive. I would not be surprised if it was as much as than \$1,500.



With Viveport President Rickard Steiber, VR Voice in the Vuze Camera Booth at CES.

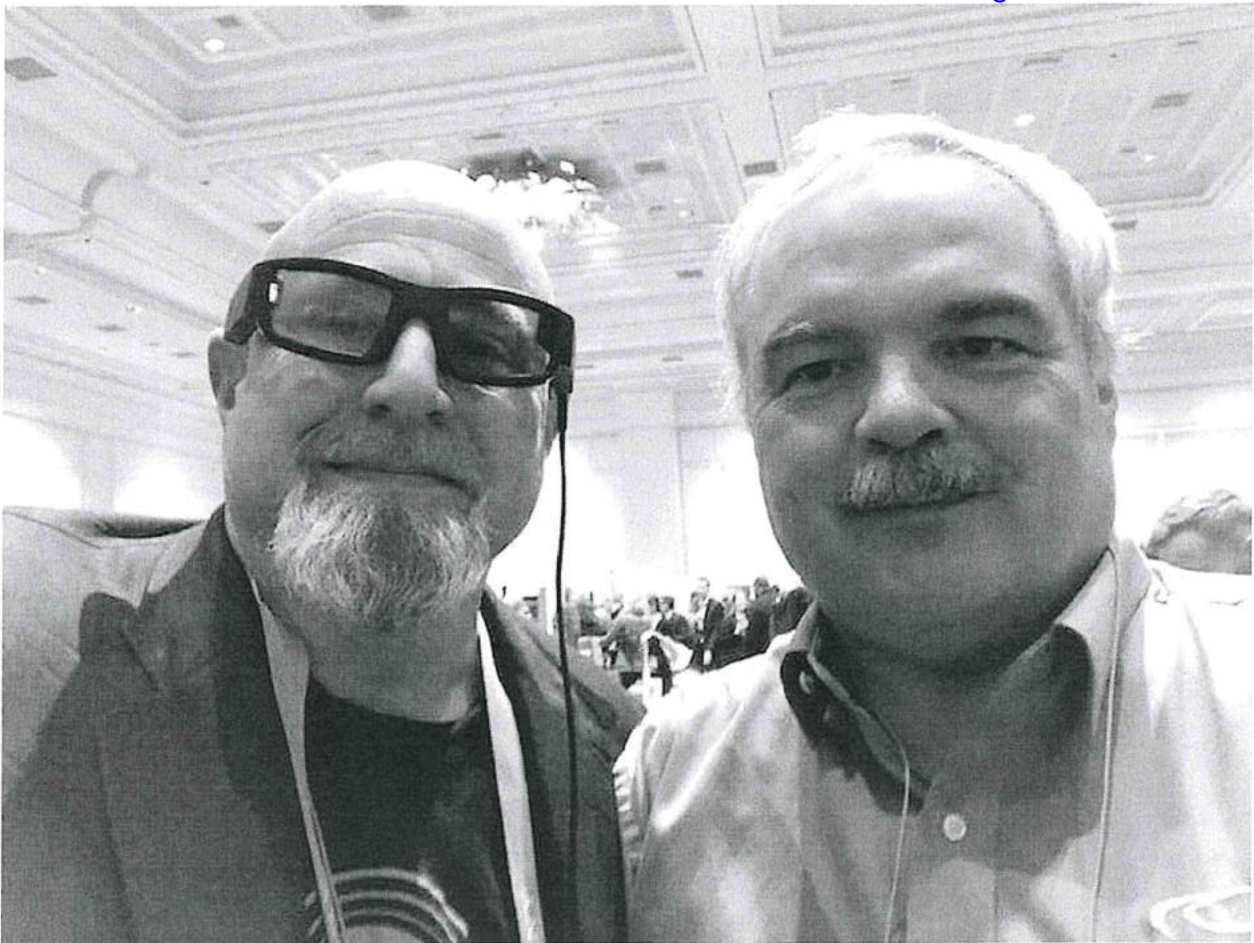
MICHAEL EICHENSEER

I was fortunate enough to snag an interview with Viveport President Rikard Steiber. Viveport has recently redesigned to create what Steiber describes as "a VR-first experience that allows users to experience 3D content themselves while browsing, rather than watching a 2D video of someone else's experience."

Subscriptions continue to exceed expectations, and the number of titles available to subscribers now exceeds 200.

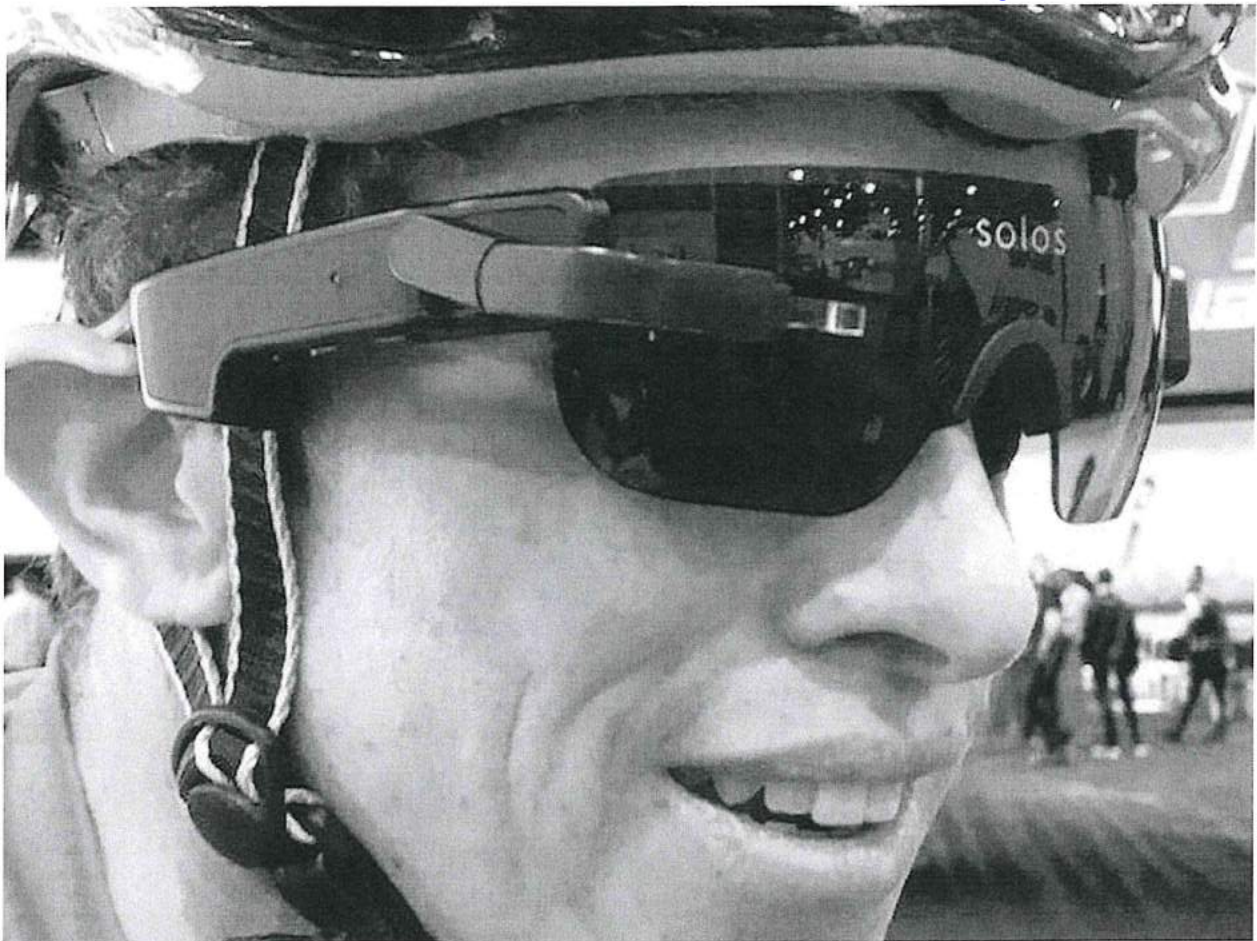
Someone at Vive was giving select press and VIPs a demo of the ultralight \$500 wireless standalone VR device, the Vive Focus, which is being introduced in China next month. I found the quality remarkably good and being untethered intoxicating. No U.S. date has been set, nor do we know if it will use Viveport, Daydream or Steam for its content. Here in the US, deep-pocketed Oculus is set to offer its untethered standalone, the Go. The Go is similar to the Gear VR but no smartphone is required. The Vive Focus, which is more than twice as expensive, felt much more like high-end VR we're used to seeing on gaming PCs with new graphics cards.

The Vuzix Blade is a consumer version of its current industrial smart glasses. These extremely lightweight (3 oz) glasses from Vuzix are operated by a combination of wing swipes, gestures and voice commands (integrates Alexa). A very tiny 8MB high-resolution display is projected on a small portion of one of your lenses. Because of the short focal distance, users can choose to focus on the tiny screen, making it seem much bigger, or continue to focus on the physical world beyond the lenses. There are terrific business and consumer applications for the blade. Vuzix is taking deposits for developer kits on its website and hopes to ship a consumer version by the end of the year. The Vuzix Blade was awarded four CES Innovation awards in the areas of Fitness, Sports, and Biotech; Wireless Handset Accessories; Portable Media Players and Accessories as well as Computer Accessories.



With Paul Travers, CEO of Vuzix, wearing their upcoming "Blades". CHARLIE FINK

Kopin Solos. Kopin, until recently, was a little-known provider of HUD and other AR optics and components for military devices. The company is now moving into the consumer market with an AR device of its own, Solos, a smart cycling heads-up display which works a lot like the Vuzix Blade, but is half the price. Solos feature voice control enhanced audio and also throws a high definition window into the corner of the glasses' lenses.



Kopin Solos Bike Riding Glasses will retail for \$499. CHARLIE FINK

Lenovo's AR & VR offerings show how serious the company is about being a player in this category. They are targeting three very specific and distinct markets with their Star Wars AR game headset, the Mirage Solo for Daydream (coming this summer) and their fully occluded Windows MR headset.



Lenovo's three plays in AR & VR. From left, Disney Last Jedi Star Wars HMD and lightsaber, Lenovo Explorer for Windows MR, and their soon to be released Mirage Solo for Google Daydream. CHARLIE FINK

The \$99 Mira Prism continues to intrigue as it tantalizes us with a simple solution to throwing data into our field of view: Pepper's Ghost. Simply, your phone mounts on the top of the Prism. Its stereoscopic images are projected onto the lenses. Boom. Welcome to AR. We're told the Prism will be available later this year.



The fiendishly simple and effective Mira Prism always puts a smile on my face. CHARLIE FINK

Holobeam Me Up, Scotty! Microsoft gave me a private demonstration of volumetric telepresence with HoloLens from a German company, Valorem, which I wrote about in Forbes just eight weeks ago, as part of a story about the coming disruption of telecommunications. The technology makes science fiction science fact, but it is far from worked out. As you can see from the shot through the lens of the HoloLens, the participants in the conference look like victims of a Star Trek transporter accident.



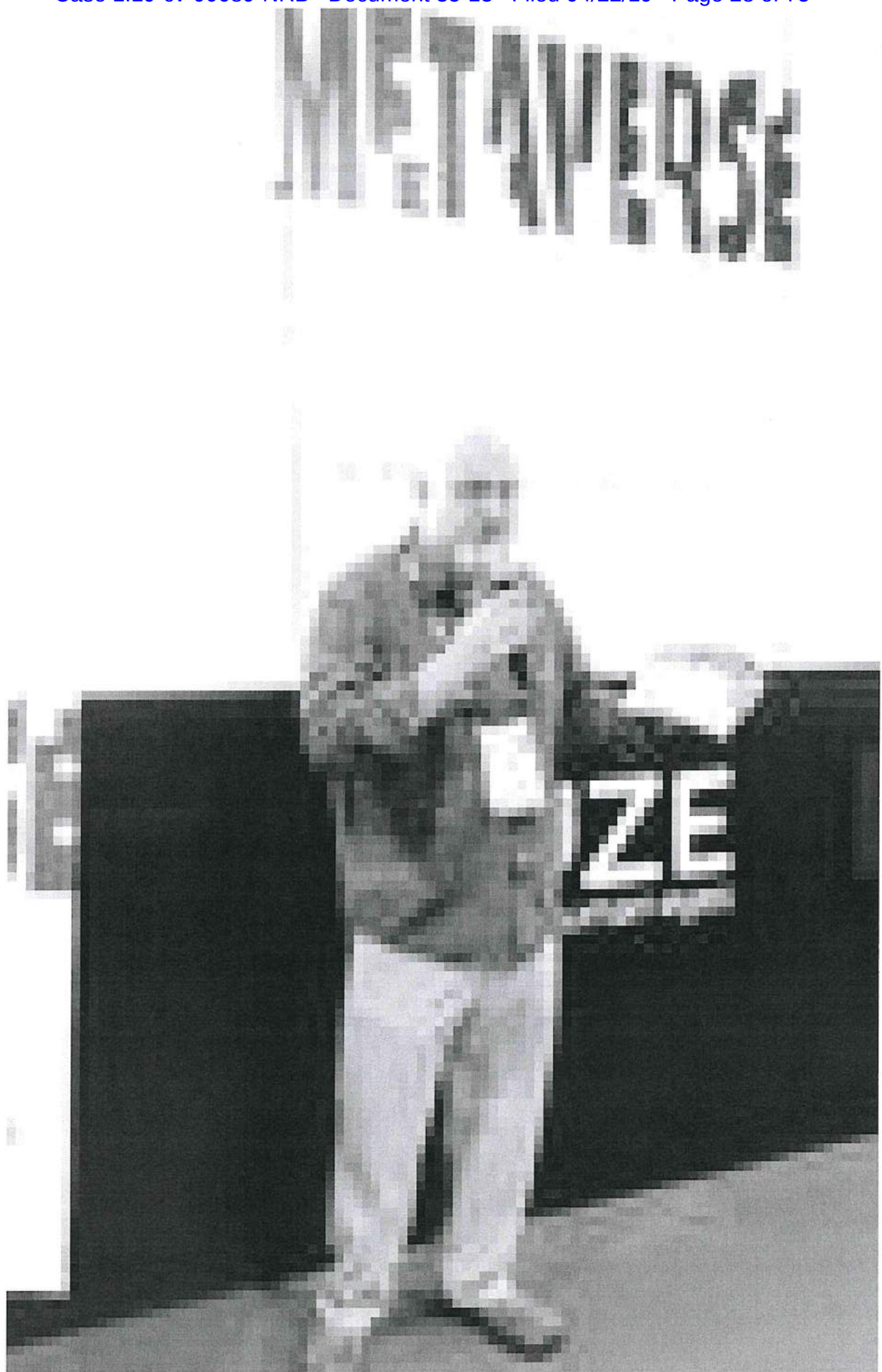
Holoportation, in which real space is occupied by remote participants, may transform communications as we know it. CHARLIE FINK

Last, but hardly least, was Kino-mo, shows off its amazing Hypervsn retail promotion product, which uses spinning LEDs to project animated, floating, holographic 3D images into space.



Someday soon we really could be living in a *Blade Runner* world where commercial strips will be filled with floating Holographic billboards. 2D video can't do it justice. You have to see it in person. With your naked eyes. That's the thing about CES. As much as you hate it, you have to see for yourself.

Oh! And to celebrate the release of my new book, [Charlie Fink's Metaverse, An AR Enabled Guide to VR & AR](#), I signed and gave away over 100 copies, courtesy of Vuze Camera.



Gratitude to my colleague, editor and publisher, Bob Fine of VR Voice, our contributors, and our incredible host, Vuze 3-D HD Camera, GREGORY PANOS

You don't need to buy the book to get a taste of the AR inside: (1) download & open the app (2) Go to Finkmetaverse.com and point your camera at the book cover art (3) be amazed by AR art that literally pops up out of the page.



Point your camera at the cover logo and see the book come to life. CHARLIE FINK



Charlie Fink Contributor

Charlie Fink is an AR/VR Consultant, Forbes Columnist, and the Author of "Charlie Fink's Metaverse, An AR Enabled Guide to VR & AR" (2018) and "Convergence, How The ... **Read More**

4/14/2019

Google Pitting Its Assistant vs. Amazon's Alexa at CES 2018 - TheStreet

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Google Pitting Its Assistant vs. Amazon's Alexa at CES 2018

The two tech giants' digital assistants will be popping up in more places than just your smart speaker in the coming year.

By **Annie Palmer**

Updated: Jan 8, 2018 1:02 PM EST

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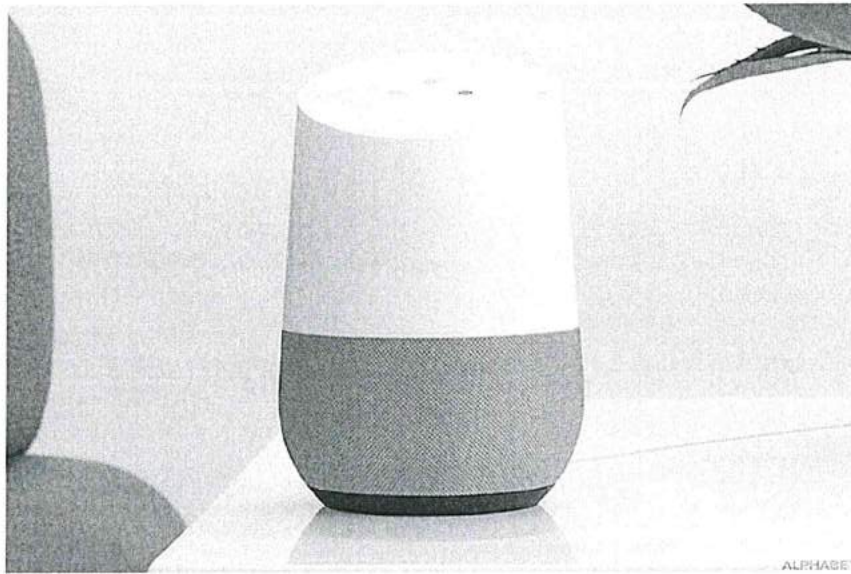
Amazon ([AMZN - Get Report](#)) and Alphabet's ([GOOGL - Get Report](#)) Google are throwing down the digital assistant gauntlet at CES 2018.

Both tech giants will have their voice-activated devices on display front and center at CES, the world's biggest tech and consumer electronics trade show, which kicks off today in Las Vegas. While Amazon has so far maintained a lead with its range of voice-activated Echo devices, Google is making a renewed effort at CES to push its own smart speaker, the Google Home.

For many years, Google and other big tech names (including Apple ([AAPL - Get Report](#)), Microsoft ([MSFT - Get Report](#)) and Facebook ([FB - Get Report](#))) have shied away from CES, but the Alphabet unit is coming out in full force this year. The search giant set up an outdoor booth at the show, called the Google Assistant Playground, which features a giant, blue slide and the company also has a Google Assistant advertisement emblazoned on Las Vegas Monorail.

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Google Pitting Its Assistant vs. Amazon's Alexa at CES 2018 - TheStreet



The Google Home smart speaker is one of many devices that house Google's voice assistant technology.

Amazon, which heavily advertised its voice assistant technology at last year's CES, is also expected to have a significant presence at this year's conference. Wearables startup Vuzix (**VUZI** - Get Report) is showing off a pair of augmented-reality smart glasses that respond to commands from Amazon's Alexa voice assistant. At CES 2017, Amazon announced partnerships with Ford (**F** - Get Report), Huawei and LG to integrate Alexa into their products, and it's likely that more Alexa-enabled products will be introduced at this year's show.

Industry watchers believe that CES 2018 could be a showcase for a developing trend where voice assistant technology is added to more and more devices beyond smart speakers, such as TVs, cars and Internet of Things (IoT) devices such as smart fridges, faucets, security systems and other home appliances. Google and Amazon may also be shopping for new partners at CES, as both companies look to build out the ecosystems around their Alexa and Assistant devices, respectively, beyond the devices they each produce. Other players, such as Samsung (**SSNLF** and its Bixby voice assistant, are also holding court at CES, with Samsung announcing Bixby integration for its smart refrigerator.

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Aside from its Alexa-enabled smart glasses, Amazon has already announced a slew of other partnerships. Consumer tech company Anker introduced the Viva, an Alexa-enabled, Bluetooth-connected device that plugs into the USB charger in your car. Alexa is also being integrated into Canary security systems, GE light switches, Whirlpool ovens and microwaves, Kohler mirrors and faucets, as well as a Hisense TV.

Vuzix's Blade smart glasses, which made news on Friday, may not be the final frontier for Alexa-enabled glasses, however. It's possible that Amazon could announce partnerships with other, more established wearable makers later on down the line, or, as Moor Insights & Strategy president Patrick Moorhead points out, Amazon could bite the bullet and make its own Alexa-enabled glasses.

"Ultimately, I'm expecting Amazon to release their own goggles once the business opportunities firm up in VR and AR," Moorhead explained. "Amazon likely has one in the labs."

Amazon could easily become a major player in the augmented reality-enabled glasses market. Earlier entrants, such as Snap's (**SNAP** - Get Report) Spectacles and Google Glass, have faced disappointing levels of consumer adoption. Google Glass ultimately pivoted to the enterprise market in 2016 after it failed to gain any traction after its initial release in the early 2000s. And Apple has been widely rumored to be considering producing its own smart glasses.

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Snap's Spectacles haven't lived up to expectations like the social media company thought they would.

For now, it seems that Amazon and Google are more focused on penetrating the IoT market with their respective voice assistants. With its early entry into the category, Amazon has developed a significant lead, with tech research firm Strategy Analytics estimating that Alexa was on 68% of all smart speakers by the end of the fourth quarter of 2017. But that number was down from 80% in the first half of 2017. Google trails Amazon at 25%, but has been making strong gains in the last few months.

Both Amazon and Google have strong motivations to sell more of their voice-activated assistants. Voice has been picking up speed as a preferred method for shopping, and consumers are already using voice-activated devices as search engines. That, in turn, generates valuable data for the tech companies behind the devices, which is especially useful for Amazon's e-commerce business.

Ultimately, voice-activated devices could become the next frontier for digital advertising, which is currently dominated by Google and Facebook. It may not be very long before Google and Amazon begin serving up ads on their Echo and Assistant devices, or now, even your fridge, mirror or home security device.

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4/14/2019

First Alexa-powered AR glasses is worth \$1000: Is it worth buying?

Technology | Tech & Trend

First Alexa-powered AR glasses is worth \$1000: Is it worth buying?

By Mario Manlupig, Jr

January 7, 2018 11:35 +08

Amazon's Alexa voice assistant holds a new job role as a New York-based startup is about to introduce the first-ever voice-enabled augmented reality glasses at CES in Las Vegas. Coming with a hefty price tag at US\$1,000, should you consider ditching your dusty old-style glasses for this pair of promising innovation?

Vuzix Corp is set to unveil its Blade smart glasses that users can instruct to scour the internet for information and display fetched results to the wearer's field of view. According to company chief executive Paul Travers, the Alexa-activated AR glasses will be available to the public by the second quarter for about US\$1,000.

Also read: Talking fridge and TV? Expect these and more innovative smart devices at CES

Amazon has confirmed that Vuzix's wearable technology will be the first smart glasses with Alexa, which is part of the e-commerce firm's program that allows third-party hardware manufacturers to integrate the artificial intelligence-powered personal digital assistant into their devices. This apparently gives Amazon the opportunity to peddle its online products and services to other markets and new customers.

Should you buy it?

The Vuzix Blade smart glasses' whopping US\$1,000 price is clearly too much to shell out for many. Travers concedes to its "high price point" but hopes to accomplish "the ultimate goal to have it under US\$500" by 2019.

With Vuzix's AR glasses, wearers can take advantage of Alexa's integration in countless ways possible, such as requests for a map or sports scores on the glasses. However, they have to sign up for an Amazon account to leverage the technology.

The AR glasses industry has not been highly saturated or dominated by any particular players at the



4/14/2019

First Alexa-powered AR glasses is worth \$1000: Is it worth buying?

Amazon.

Google pioneered this technology years ago with the Google Glass prototype before it ventured into beefing up its Pixel smartphones with AR features and launching the Daydream View VR headset. Apple Inc is slated to release its AR glasses by 2020 as reported.

Amazon publicly launched Alexa in 2014. Originally designed for Amazon's own products, it has since found its way to hundreds of third-party technologies like Ford's SYNC-enabled cars, Martian mVoice smartwatches, Nucleus Intercom pager, iHome AVS16 alarm clock and LG's Smart Instaview refrigerator, among many others.



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Alexa-powered smartglasses? Yes, from Vuzix

Talking to your glasses via Amazon's voice assistant is possible. It's a lot like Google Glass. But don't expect it to be affordable.

BY SCOTT STEIN | JANUARY 16, 2018 7:36 AM PST



A phone selfie taken while wearing Vuzix Blade. It'd be hard to tell these are smartglasses.

Scott Stein/CNET

You can stick [Amazon's Alexa](#) into all sorts of things: [speakers](#), [cars](#), [phones](#), [watches](#), [robots](#) and [even refrigerators](#). Add smartglasses to that list.

Vuzix, makers of various smartglasses and [Google Glass](#)-like head wearables for years, are now making smart eyewear compatible with Amazon's Alexa. [Bloomberg broke the news](#) ahead of CES, but I got to wear the glasses in Las Vegas. Smartglasses, in general, were all over the crowded convention halls. Gadget makers [still want our eyes](#).

4/14/2019

CES 2018: Vuzix Blade glasses are powered by Alexa - CNET

It won't be last wearable to connect with Alexa. Amazon has just made it a lot easier for watches, headphones and more to work with Alexa. It's possible that the Vuzix Blade is an example of what's to come.



All the cool new gadgets at CES 2018

63 PHOTOS

The Vuzix Blade is a pair of sorta-sunglass-like glasses that project heads-up information on its lenses. The glasses also have a built-in camera, microphone and side-mounted touchpad. They pair with iPhones or Android phones in order to take calls and to funnel info to your eyes. The Blade will work with prescription lenses, too.

Alexa wasn't working when I tried Vuzix Blade (the place I demoed had bad Wi-Fi connectivity, according to Vuzix). Unfortunately, I don't know how good Alexa on smartglasses could be yet. But the glasses are pretty compact and comfortable.

vuzix-blade-lens

A tiny display hidden on one side projects onto a single lens.

Scott Stein/CNET

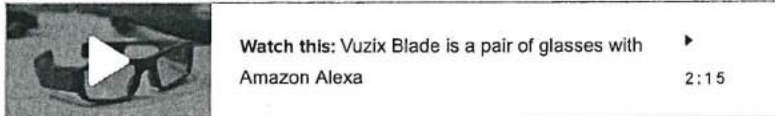
The thick arms contain extra hardware and a side touchpad for navigation. But the Blade only has a display in one eye, just like Google Glass. It's a decently sized heads-up display, but don't confuse with AR tech that blends 3D images into the real world.

I pulled up a web browser, and played a little game in another app. Taking photos with it reminds me of Google Glass. In fact, a lot of the Blade reminds me of Google Glass (and Glass had a voice assistant, too). The biggest problem with wearing Glass, among other things, was getting used to having an odd headset on all day long that made me feel uncomfortable. Vuzix Blade looks more like normal glasses, but what are the odds that I'd prefer wearing them to a simple pair of earbuds?

4/14/2019

CES 2018: Vuzix Blade glasses are powered by Alexa - CNET

Alexa could end up being a versatile partner for heads-up displays, and for those that need assistive wearable tech, it could be great news. But, at \$1,000 a pair (roughly converting to £725 in the UK and AU\$1,260 in Australia), these are hardly something you'll buy casually. Maybe in another few years. Maybe.



Alexa Mobile Accessory Kit: Amazon makes it easier to put Alexa in wearable tech.

CES evolves AR and VR: small changes are everywhere.

CES 2018: CNET's complete coverage of tech's biggest show.

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Apple iPhone X (64GB, Space Gray)



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At CES, VR and AR are evolving right under your nose

Don't expect wild new worlds: This year, it's small changes that matter.

BY SCOTT STEIN | JANUARY 12, 2018 12:54 PM PST



Lenovo's new Google Daydream VR headset can work without a phone, and even let you walk a bit.

James Martin/CNET

When VR first made its major CES reemergence via Oculus Rift years ago, it was jaw-dropping.

Those moments, since, are harder to come by. After a 2017 where VR hardware sales flagged and buzz quieted, AR started to gain steam via phone apps from Apple and Google. Meanwhile, the dream of some next-level "mixed reality" -- a holographic blend of the virtual and real -- hasn't gotten here. We have HoloLens, and we wonder what Magic Leap will be, but no new things came from CES.

But there were discoveries, and trends, and things to talk about in AR and VR. You just had to pay attention.



VR, smart displays

00:00 / 00:05

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HTC's new Vive Pro has upgraded display resolution and can be completely wireless from the PC, with a separate Intel WiGig adapter.

CNET

VR is getting better with key upgrades: wireless, better res, better cameras

Maybe virtual reality, as an industry, realizes that getting everyday people into headsets, not to mention buying them, isn't easy. Instead, HTC is pushing its Vive hardware into deeper enthusiast and enterprise territory. The HTC Vive Pro has higher-resolution displays, a comfier fit, a larger range of movement, and you can even cut the cord with a wireless Intel WiGig adapter that removes the tether to the PC.

The Vive Pro doesn't have a price, and it's not likely to be cheap. But it's driving VR forward with improved and much-needed tweaks that truly make a difference, and will eventually be in more affordable headsets, too.



Now playing: VR, smart displays and even smart toilets at CES 2018...

10:30

Meanwhile, mobile headsets could get better tracking: Lenovo and Google's VR collaboration, the Mirage Solo, adds cameras that allow a bit of walking and movement like PC VR does. (More on that below.)

Problems in VR might be disappearing, too. It's still not possible to try VR games and really avoid tripping over furniture; cameras on VR headsets don't see the real world much yet. Occipital demoed a way to pass information about the real world into VR using stereo cameras on a headset. The room around me continued to be scanned in real time, providing a better awareness than Vive, Oculus, Microsoft and PlayStation VR currently allow. Maybe Occipital's VR/AR SLAM (simultaneous localization and mapping) system will find its way into future VR



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headsets, and make larger walk-around virtual-reality living room holodecks easier to navigate.

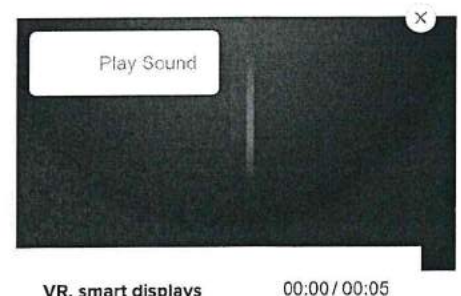


Lenovo's Mirage Solo headset works with Google Daydream without a phone, but still uses the same remote.

James Martin/CNET

Phone-free mobile VR is coming, if you want it

Some virtual reality hardware requires consoles and PCs, but mobile VR needs a phone. That will change, soon, thanks to self-contained headsets with mobile processors inside. Google and Lenovo's Mirage Solo with Daydream headset is like the upcoming Oculus Go: both are gear you can instantly use without adding a phone. The Mirage Solo has another trick up its sleeve with limited camera-based positional tracking that allow you to lean in, duck or take a few steps in supported Google Daydream apps. These stand-alone mobile headsets could end up being popular in classrooms, for public VR screenings and experiences, and for anyone that doesn't already have a VR-ready top-end phone.



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Vuzix Blade bakes Amazon Alexa into its Google Glass-like smartglasses.

Josh Miller

Smartglasses + voice AI = ?

Google Glass feels like a million tech years ago. And yet there are still many smartglasses that are essentially the same thing: a monocular single display hovering in one eye, a built-in camera and no easy to control anything. Vuzix Blade is the first pair of smartglasses promising built-in Amazon Alexa for voice-controlling access to messages, connected devices and getting to info faster. I didn't get to demo how well Alexa performed with Vuzix Blade, but I'm skeptical. Chinese AI company Rokid is exploring a similar idea with Rokid Glass. Will voice assistants help AR? Right now it seems like an exploration, not a clear answer.



Pop a phone in: iPhone and Android AR toys that work with ARKit and ARCore, like Merge's 6DoF Blaster, might be the best bang for the buck.

Sarah Tew/CNET



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While AR finds its way, maybe simple toys are the best bet

While augmented reality and mixed reality headsets still cost either hundreds or thousands of dollars -- or don't even exist yet (see Magic Leap) -- the safest path might be connected phone accessories that tap into Apple's ARKit and Google's ARCore. Merge's 6DoF Blaster is like a reinvented Laser Tag gun that plays games, and it could work with multiplayer and across iOS and Android. It was the smoothest-running AR demo I tried on the CES show floor.

 012-rokid-ces-2018

Rokid Glass: Another assistant-in-smartglasses idea you'll probably never use.
Sarah Tew/CNET

The future's not here (yet)

Oculus' next-generation hardware is on the horizon. Magic Leap might have its hardware debut this year. Other surprises are undoubtedly in store. VR and AR are still in evolution. The next big step isn't here. But it feels like we're a half-step closer than before.



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Amazon, and ride the waves with surfing
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Augmented Reality To Get Bigger Stage At CES 2018 - Nasdaq.com

Augmented Reality To Get Bigger Stage At CES 2018

January 05, 2018, 08:00:39 AM EDT By PATRICK SEITZ, Investor's Business Daily



Shutterstock photo

Among the technology areas expected to generate buzz next week at the annual CES consumer electronics trade show in Las Vegas is augmented reality.

The Consumer Technology Association, which owns and produces CES, says that the augmented reality marketplace at CES 2018 has expanded to a record 10,900 net square feet, which is 10% larger than it was at last year's show. Augmented reality overlays digitally created content onto a user's real-world environment either using special eyeglasses or a smartphone's display

and camera.

AR companies exhibiting at CES 2018 range from smart motorcycle helmet maker Skullly Technologies to enterprise AR headset maker **Vuzix** (VUZI).

IBD'S TAKE: *For the latest news from CES, visit the IBD page " CES 2018 News: The World's Largest Consumer Tech Show ."*

Augmented reality has been a hot topic since **Apple** (AAPL) added AR sensors and capabilities into its latest iPhones last fall. It has been pushing software developers to make AR apps for the iPhone. On Thursday, Apple said nearly 2,000 AR apps have been developed using its AR Kit software tools. They include games, social media, education and shopping apps.

Last month, closely watched startup Magic Leap previewed its first AR smart glasses, called Magic Leap One. It expects to begin selling the hardware later this year, but hasn't announced pricing or a release date.

Unfortunately, neither Apple nor Magic Leap are exhibiting at CES 2018.

Nevertheless, CES is seeing "impressive growth" in exhibit space for both AR and virtual reality technologies at the show, Karen Chupka, senior vice president of the Consumer Technology Association, said in a statement .

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Apple Readying Augmented-Reality Glasses For 2020 Launch: Report

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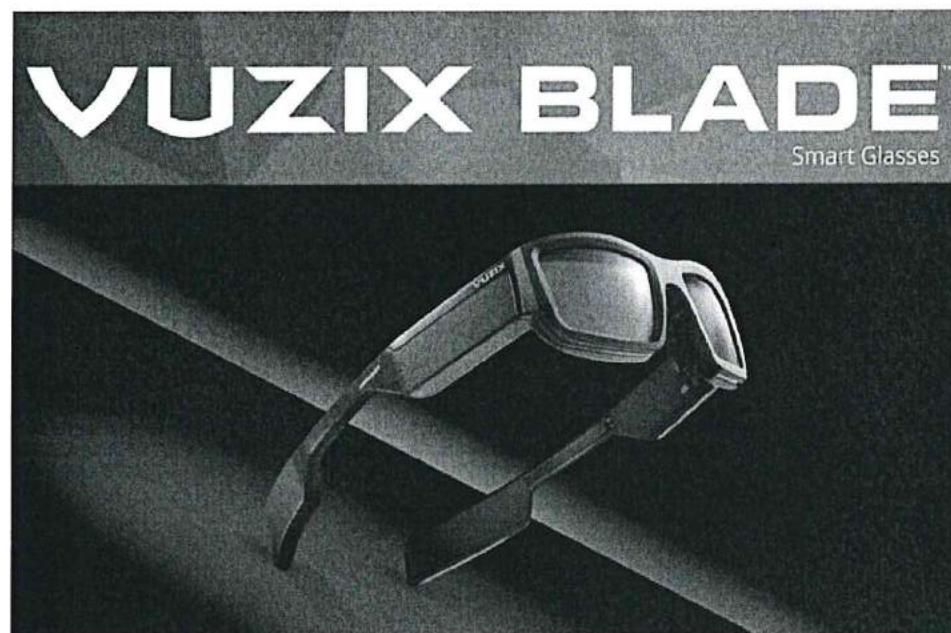
by Joe Shields on January 9, 2018 12:00 PM EST

Posted in AR VR CES 2018

6

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LAS VEGAS, NV -- Vuzix announced that its latest product would debut next week, and it may be the breakthrough in AR devices that we've been waiting for. The Vuzix Blade could be among the first smart glasses that fit in a familiar, comfortable form factor and don't look like a technophile's goofy gadget.

"What differentiates the Vuzix Blade from all existing or proposed AR smart glasses and mixed reality head-mounted computers, is that it's built for today's user," said Paul Travers, President and CEO of Vuzix in a press release. "With a fashionable form factor, a brilliant display, and a broad range of features that allow the user to experience AR at work or play, the Vuzix Blade is the first pair of smart glasses that people would actually enjoy wearing."

He also stated that the spectacles will work "right out of the box, without the need for programming."



From the outside, the Vuzix Blade Smartglasses look like a standard (yet chunky) pair of eyeglasses. They sport an unsuspecting frame, with transparent prescription-capable lenses. Vuzix said it designed the Blade

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lanCutress: "Google Assistant, stop showing me notifications about Formula 1" "Here is the latest news from Formula 1" Fuuuuu... <https://t.co/fda430atjR>

lanCutress: @david_schor Hmm. Cool chips and back. Europe and back?

lanCutress: @witekenc @4x1mux Or Cambricon

lanCutress: @witekenc @4x1mux No one mentioned Huawei.

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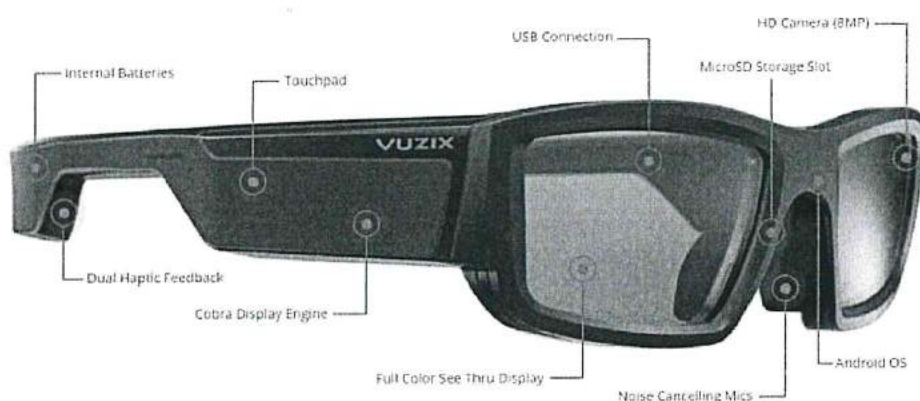
Vuzix's New AR Glasses Actually Look Like Glasses

Smartglasses to be comfortable for all-day use, and it managed to cram all the internals into a compact package that weighs less than 3 oz.

The Vuzix Blade Smartglasses are powered by an undisclosed quad-core ARM CPU, and they operate on a custom build of Google's Android OS. The device includes a touchpad input, and it has a noise canceling microphone for voice. You can also pair them with an Android or iOS smartphone to let you accept phone calls through the device. When thusly paired, the Blade Smartglasses can also integrate with the applications on your phone to receive visual notifications, such as text messages or GPS alerts. It will also provide social network notifications and weather updates.

Vuzix stuck a tiny projector called the Cobra Display Engine in the right side of the device. It projects light into the company's proprietary Waveguide Optics. Vuzix didn't say how wide the field of view is in the Blade Smartglasses but did confirm that the FOV is adjustable and provides a "sizeable virtual screen" for digital content. The company also said that its Waveguide optics produce a "brilliant palette of colors" with adjustable brightness.

Vuzix also equipped the Blade Smartglasses with a front-facing 1080p video camera that can capture first-person video of your activities. The camera can also take 8MP still photos.



The Blade Smartglasses were designed to be a consumer device, but the almost \$2,000 price tag suggests otherwise; when the Oculus Rift and HTC Vive hit the market for \$599 and \$799, respectively, most consumers balked at the idea of paying so much. It is true that Vuzix didn't reveal the retail price of the Blade Smartglasses, but the company is currently accepting reservations for developer kits, and you'll need deep pockets to secure a pair: To put your name on the list, you have to plunk down a \$495 deposit. But before Vuzix ships you a pair, you'll have to settle the remaining balance of \$1,502. For that price, developers receive a pre-production unit and a production pair, when they're ready to go. Given those numbers, we expect the final product to sell for anywhere from \$700 to \$1,200.

Vuzix Blade™ Augmented Reality Smartglasses



Related Reading:

- [HTC at CES 2018: Vive Pro VR Headset with Higher-Res Displays, Two Cams, Headphones](#)
- [VR Startup Varjo Announces Shipping of High Resolution Headset Prototype, Aimed at Professional Markets](#)

IanCutress: @dylan522p Besides, I could have been using two CPUs with a mismatch config.

ganeshts: @Teymur @holgr <https://t.co/73yoRX8sB2> . costs \$1200 for 3.8TB [<https://t.co/NzlyjN5w12>], and \$2800 for 7.6TB [... <https://t.co/AVISvsdjhQOL>]

ganeshts: @holgr Internal 4TB+ M.2 SSDs should appear prior to the external ones. Problem is that price per GB is still too h... <https://t.co/beLY0Tttx>

andreif7: The new Star Wars trailer: We burned all story bridges with the TLJ, so here's a bunch of nostalgia stuff because w... <https://t.co/k1VqYkpUut>

andreif7: Thank you all for your democratic votes: the final tally is 52% to 48% - just like Brexit, the people have spoken.

andreif7: @LightYagami8888 Not if I actually review the G8 as well, which I do.

andreif7: I do hope people appreciate how painstaking my current camera testing format is. Sorting pictures and putting them... <https://t.co/e7yBtXScPW>

RyanSmithAT: @andreif7 Andrei, don't worry. I've called the police and they're on their way. Just hold tight a little bit longer...

andreif7: HAHAAHAHAHA man. I'm out doing camera work with the phones and this is the prime example of the S10 unlocking in o... <https://t.co/yZaYNRhwT>

RyanSmithAT: Qualcomm is hardly the first company doing a dedicated AI inference ASIC. But it's an aggressive move for the compa... <https://t.co/L3T0vZ178>

ganeshts: @VishalPushesit @IntelGraphics @antahungler Thanks! I remember reading that PR :) How do I enable DoVi output in p... <https://t.co/5TzYi4vYH7>

ganeshts: @DanMatte @anandtech @RyanSmithAT Yes, both Broadcom and Intel (I assume you are referring to uplink OFDMA in particular)

ganeshts: RT @anandtech: Intel's Bear Canyon (NUC97BEH) Coffee Lake NUC Review - Ticking the Right Boxes <https://t.co/Dmv9MOTimV>

RyanSmithAT: @Casper042 @IanCutress has been working on this day and night for the past week. It's a lot of work, to say the lea... <https://t.co/IF6xZGU8W>

RyanSmithAT: @IanCutress And then you need the Optane DIMMs to go with it...

RyanSmithAT: So @IanCutress and I were just doing some paper napkin math on the size of the Cascade Lake-AP chip. Based on pictu... <https://t.co/yR0MdNucJs>

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- *Futuremark To Release VRMark Cyan Room on November 22: A DX12 VR Benchmark*
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Written by Kevin Carbotte | Tom's Hardware

Source: Tom's Hardware

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megadirk - Tuesday, January 09, 2018 - link

Looked interesting until I saw the price and what they actually looked like on someones face. Better than a VR headset for sure, but still not "walk around town without getting weird looks" better.

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Pinn - Tuesday, January 09, 2018 - link

Had a coworker show me google glass awhile back. See nothing new here.

REPLY

pixelstuff - Tuesday, January 09, 2018 - link

I have a feeling that Magic Leap will provide the true break through we need for AR. See if you guys can get a hands on demo with those guys somehow.

REPLY

pdf - Wednesday, January 10, 2018 - link

Look like more HUD than AR to me, thoroughly uninteresting until we can get some actual augmentation to our reality.

REPLY

edzieba - Wednesday, January 10, 2018 - link

Ugh, a low-FoV trackingless HUD, same as have been available for the last couple of decades (though not with the Tiny Awful Portable Computer in the headband rather than a belt unit), except now they're lying by calling it AR to ride the premature marketing hype wave.

Unless you already have a system using an existing glasses HUD, and want to switch it to Android and get rid of the belt-box, there's basically no reason to buy this.

REPLY

theuglyman0war - Thursday, January 18, 2018 - link

Oh Joy! Another AR device with all the immersive drama that can be mustered out of a floating postage stamp. (thousands of dollars for the privilege of developing on a vapor product. Because providing for developers respected as partners is out of the question with the new developer preview paradigm)

I will gladly pay however!

Just the thought of coding/developing intensely immersive content on such a device has me giddy with anticipation.

I fancy a daydream starring all the insufferable tools one might experience on a daily basis seemingly "talking to themselves" loudly out in public spaces (into their blue tooth earpieces)...

Where in my fantasy...

their socially oblivious solo-ego displays in combination with my addictive content immersions cause them to walk clueless into rush hour traffic where society if freed from their loud vainglorious and obtuse conversations with invisible associates:

When large dump-trucks or speeding school buses flatten them into pancakes! Along with their blue tooth headsets and Alternate Reality glasses. The afterlife after being flattened because u walked out into traffic oblivious to everyone around you! Wham! Yep that would be a fine Alternate reality. :)

Damn..

Now I have guilt.

REPLY

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Hands On With Vuzix Blade Smartglasses at CES 2018 | Digital Trends

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FEATURES

Vuzix built the smartglasses Google wishes it did

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Attention, crestfallen Google Glass enthusiasts: Your redemption has arrived.

While most of the tech world dismissed the “smartglasses” concept when Google put Glass to bed back in 2015, Vuzix continued toiling away on the form factor it has been working on since long before Google ever took an interest. The result, at long last: A pair of smartglasses you may actually want to wear.

No, we can’t guarantee your safety in a crowded San Francisco bar should you decide to wade into the ungentrified masses with the Vuzix Blade on a Saturday night. But we can say the sleek new shades are both eminently less punchable, and more functional than Glass ever was.

The Blade use Vuzix’s proprietary waveguide technology to superimpose bright, crystal-clear images directly in your line of sight. Unlike Glass, there’s no awkward arm jutting front of your eye. With the display turned off, the Blade glasses look like any other. Despite the tinted look you see in photos, you’ll have no issues wearing them indoors.

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Hands On With Vuzix Blade Smartglasses at CES 2018 | Digital Trends



We wouldn't go so far as to call them "stylish," but next to just about any other form of techified eyewear, the Blade are at least *normalish*. You might even mistake them for a pair of Oakleys, if it weren't for the light glowing around the fat temples.

How do they work? In an insane way you would probably never believe if you didn't see it with your own eyes. A tiny LED projector in the temple shoots an image sideways into the lens, which has been laser-etched with tiny dots at specific depths that catch the "sideways" image and light it up in your field of view. If that all sounds a little ridiculous, it is. But that's why Vuzix has been working on it for years, and why the end product looks so damn good. The same tech appeared in last year's AR3000 smartglasses, but Vuzix marketed those more toward businesses.

When the display flicks on, you'll get the usual there-and-not "ghost" effect of something seen only in one eye, until you look squarely at the image and freeze it into focus. Vuzix wouldn't cite an exact resolution for the display, but the images unquestionably look better than anything

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Hands On With Vuzix Blade Smartglasses at CES 2018 | Digital Trends

we've ever seen on Glass – comparable in resolution to the HoloLens, Vuzix says.

Nick Mokey/Digital Trends

You can use this little display to look at everything from photos to video, maps, and email. Pretty standard stuff, sure, but Vuzix already has an app store with third-party options for Spotify, Pandora, Netflix, and all the other staples you would expect, cooked up for previous Vuzix eyewear. You navigate through apps with an intuitive, touch-sensitive pad on the temple: swipe to navigate, tap to select.

Of course, the Blade still has some obvious shortcomings. Notably, battery life would still be as short as 90 minutes in extreme use-case scenarios, like watching movies. That's not what they're intended for, of course, but it illustrates one of the sacrifices made to keep them so sleek.

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Hands On With Vuzix Blade Smartglasses at CES 2018 | Digital Trends

Will you start spotting Vuzix eyewear around town in 2018? At \$1,000 a pop for the developer kit, probably not. But the Blade may make a compelling option for Glass devotees cast out by Google's apparent indifference. And if the current design isn't doing it for you, there's hope: Vuzix owns the patents for the killer display that makes these glasses stand out, and wouldn't rule out licensing it to other companies. All it would take is a deep-pocketed Apple, Samsung, or LG to snap it up to put this promising waveguide tech to work in something else entirely.

Editors' Recommendations

- To be blunt, the Vuzix Blade smartglasses just don't cut it
- Huawei's Eyewear smartglasses aim to fuse fashion and tech
- North Focals impressions
- North Focals smartglasses: Everything you need to know
- Huawei P30 Pro review

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Why premium is the most overused, and least understood, word in tech

Everyone has heard the word premium, and many of us will have purchased a premium product, but what does premium actually mean, and why is it used so much in tech? Here's why it's so popular.

Posted 4 weeks ago — By Andy Boxall

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Celebrate Record Store Day in style with the best vinyl setups

From simple and affordable to sleek and swanky, these are our recommendations for incredible vinyl setups that will allow you to listen to your favorite records with outstanding fidelity and take your collection to the next level.

20 hours ago — By Parker Hall

In 2019, laptops are better than ever. Here are the best of the best

The best laptop should be one that checks all the boxes: Great battery life, beautiful design, and top-notch performance. Our picks for the best laptops you can buy do all that — and throw in some extra features while they're at it.

1 day ago — By Matthew S. Smith

Sony patent describes glasses with eye tracking for VR headsets

A patent from Sony shows off prescription glasses that feature eye-tracking capabilities for a virtual reality headset but deactivates the already-existing eye-tracking feature in the headset when it senses that the glasses are in use.

3 days ago — By Charles Singletary Jr.

The heroic Huawei P30 Pro sees in the dark and has nearly limitless endurance

The Huawei P30 Pro's camera is like having Superman's eyes. It can see in the dark, and zoom right in on objects much too far away to see clearly otherwise. The camera tech is only the beginning of what we like about this smartphone...

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